

GALLERY GURLS

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Enter Frances Goodman's Woman Cave of Feminist Delights

By Jasmin Hernandez



Rapaciously Yours (2016), installation view. Courtesy of the artist and Richard Taittinger Gallery, New York.

'Rapaciously Yours', Frances Goodman's recent solo exhibit at the Richard Taittinger Gallery, addresses fundamental women's issues by way of a tantalizing visual experience. Through large-scale, emotionally engaging works, the South African artist touches upon the male gaze, unjust societal pressures on women, and the sexual empowerment/exploitation of the female body. The grotesque and almost monstrous ways in which Goodman investigates beauty and femininity are utterly compelling. In a hypnotizing manner, 'Rapaciously Yours' entices the viewer. It's a very effective seduction. Goodman executes her feminist messages through a robust array of mediums including installation, sound installation, sculpture, neon, and photography – mostly conceived using unorthodox materials like found car seats, press on nails, chintzy bijoux, and donated wedding dresses.



Frances Goodman, *Bite Your Nail* (2014). Reflective Vinyl on Plexiglas with Swarovski crystals. Courtesy of the artist and Richard Taittinger Gallery, New York.

There is a beautiful mix of the fantastical, the vulgar, the mundane and the romantic seamlessly intertwined and prettily packaged all at once. Goodman's intoxicating color palette of irresistible neon pinks, sensuous violets, luscious magentas, and lustful fuchsias mentally fondle in hushed sexual overtures. In 'Bite Your Nail' (2014), blinged-out nails and a glossy lip are at play, resembling a sexual innuendo dripping with materialistic connotations. A prime example where Goodman's themes of excess, consumerism, vanity, and sensuality emerge.



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In the sculptural work 'Medusa' (2013-2014), fake press on nails form wildly patterned tentacles, a nod to the repugnant aspects of the quest women face to achieve pressurized beauty standards. The tentacles also seem to represent how women are at times vilified as deviant or evil. Similarly in 'Violaceous' (2015), purple artificial nails engulf the bulbous sculpture and look like a large vulva, illustrating a complex relationship between superficiality and the female figure. The oversized talon-like sculptures, standing tall and pristinely lacquered, emanate a glassy sheen and call upon the public's obsession with the cosmetic and the frivolous. Goodman's focus of the beauty industry paraphernalia set out to prove a point about the unfair expectations of women's appearances.

In 'Easy Come, Easy Go' (2013), a found car seat bedecked with kitschy jewelry speaks to Goodman's documentation and interaction with sex workers. Sequins, beads, pearls, and gold chains spell out a hyper-sexual language, revelatory words exchanged during nocturnal

transactions between prostitute and client. The car seats also symbolize a space where woman bodies have been subject to exploitation, pleasure, and empowerment.



Frances Goodman, *Spit/Swallow Red-Blue* (2016). Neon. Courtesy of the artist and Richard Taittinger Gallery, New York.

The artist's use of tongue-in-cheek titles for the works act as a reinforcing component driving home her women-centric principles. In the cleverly named piece, 'Spit/Swallow' (2016), the flashing neon sculpture depicts how women vacillate between submission and rebellion in patriarchal society. Yet, 'Spit/Swallow' also possesses a double entendre, capturing a woman in the aftereffects of male ejaculation.

The majestic and ceremonious splendor of 'The Dream' (2010-2016), serves as the crown jewel of the show. Comprised of vintage wedding dresses and sumptuous fabrics, the enveloping installation highlights the monumental and cruel emphasis on marriage. Accompanied by sound recordings, numerous women openly share candid emotions wavering between envy, doubt, angst, and uncertainty over this traditional institution.

This is Frances Goodman's solo debut in the US and is the first woman artist to appear on the gallery's roster. 'Rapaciously Yours' was on view from February 27th to April 17th at Richard Taittinger Gallery. Frances Goodman was also represented by the gallery at the recent 1:54 art fair at Pioneer Works during Frieze Week.



Frances Goodman, *The Dream* (2010-2016). Silk, lace, organza, satin, beads and embroidery thread, wedding dresses, sound installation. Courtesy of the artist and Richard Taittinger Gallery, New York.



Frances Goodman, *The Dream*, (detail) (2010-2016). Silk, lace, organza, satin, beads and embroidery thread, wedding dresses, sound installation. Courtesy of the artist and Richard Taittinger Gallery, New York.



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